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STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS CELEBRATE IMPROVEMENTS AT FOSS PARK IN SOMERVILLE

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) officials, state legislators, Somerville city officials, and members of the Foss Park Neighborhood Association gathered today to celebrate initial improvements at Foss Park, a DCR park at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Broadway in Somerville. The improvements are being made with \$100,000 included in the state's Fiscal Year 2007 budget signed by Governor Deval Patrick earlier this year.

"We are delighted to be able to make these important improvements," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "The work we're doing will have a lasting impact on this popular urban park, and we thank the legislators from Somerville for their part in supporting the money to fund it. As a former mayor, I also appreciate everything the city of Somerville has done at Foss Park, and I look forward to continuing our partnership."

Improvements made so far at the park include five Big Belly solar trash compactors, which can hold several times more trash and litter than a similarly sized regular trash receptacle, as well as fresh exterior paint at the Latta Bathhouse, dispensers for biodegradable mitts to pick up and dispose of dog waste, and landscaping. Future improvements are to include new goal posts and nets, a water fountain for humans as well as one for dogs, additional improvements to the Latta Bathhouse, and portable toilets.

"This important investment of state funds to improve Foss Park is a testament to how well our legislative delegation works together and our shared commitment to investing state funds into Somerville and into our parks system," said Senator Patricia Jehlen, whose district includes parts of Somerville. "It is gratifying that DCR, in partnerships with the Foss Park Neighborhood Association, the city, and our delegation, was able to make tangible improvements that will benefit every resident of Somerville."

Foss Park, covering nearly 16 acres, was originally called Broadway Park. In 1921, it was renamed in honor of Saxton C. Foss, son of the city's poet laureate, Sam Walter Foss. Saxton Foss had died in France during World War I. The former Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) took over the park from the city in 1954, and when the MDC merged with the state Department of Environmental Management in 2003, the park came under the ownership of the newly formed DCR.

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"Green space is a precious resource for an urban community such as Somerville," said Representative Carl Sciortino Jr., whose district also includes parts of Somerville. "Foss Park has been a top priority since I entered office three years ago. I'm proud to have been able to help secure funding in the House of Representative for these improvements, and I appreciate the effort made by DCR and the state so far. I look forward to continuing to work with DCR on future improvements of the park for the benefit of this neighborhood and all of Somerville."

Foss Park is the largest park in this densely populated city of 77,000 residents. The city of Somerville has been an active partner with DCR, making its own improvements at the park and in the surrounding neighborhood.

"These are positive and welcome steps in upgrading a crucial community resource, and we hope that DCR will continue to expand their efforts," Somerville Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone said. "The City of Somerville has also contributed to improvements at Foss with thousands of dollars in new sidewalks, plantings, landscaping, and new conventional trash barrels. I hope we can work together at Foss as we have at Dilboy Stadium, and I congratulate DCR for taking these initial steps toward a long-overdue restoration of a vitally important park."

Said State Representative Tim Toomey, whose district also includes parts of Somerville, "These Big Belly trash bins provide an innovative, energy-efficient approach to dealing with trash in our parks. I'd like to thank the Foss Park Neighborhood Association – and everyone who worked hard on this – for helping ensure a beautiful, clean future for Foss Park."

In 2002, the Foss Park Neighborhood Association formed to advocate for the park and address concerns of maintenance and other issues there.

"After years of consistent advocacy, Foss Park is experiencing a revitalization," said Peter Ungar, chairman of the Foss Park Neighborhood Association. "It's great to see the results of our efforts through tangible evidence, such as the Big Belly units, new flower beds, and the newly painted pool house. Looking ahead, the Neighborhood Association is excited about continuing this productive relationship with the DCR."

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